

The forced evacuation of southern Gaza: The next stage in the ethnic cleansing of Palestine

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17 November 2023

On Thursday, Israeli forces dropped leaflets over major cities in southern Gaza, including Khan Younis, telling the population to evacuate or face the threat of death. The displacement of the population of southern Gaza is the next stage of Israel's ethnic cleansing of Palestine. One area at a time, Gaza is being depopulated through a combination of mass expulsion, massacres and starvation.

It is evident that the attacks of October 7 have been seized upon as a pretext by Israel to carry out a long-planned scheme for the systematic depopulation of Palestine, which began with northern Gaza, is now being extended to southern Gaza and will continue to the West Bank.

"You saw what happened to Gaza City," Mark Regev, a senior adviser to the Israeli prime minister, told Sky News. "Khan Younis is a center for Hamas activity as well. We're asking civilians to vacate the area for your own safety. We don't want to see you caught up in the crossfire."

By "what happened to Gaza City," Regev is referring to the systematic carpet bombing that has destroyed or damaged 40 percent of northern Gaza's homes and shattered its healthcare, food distribution and water treatment systems. All bakeries in Gaza have been shut down, and no wheat is available at any price. There is no food, no water and no medical care.

Nearly three-quarters of the population of Gaza—1.5 million people—have been internally displaced. The official death toll, which has not been updated for five days due to the collapse of the healthcare system, stands at over 11,000. Amidst the Israeli assault on Al-Shifa Hospital, 40 patients—including four babies—have died due to lack of power.

Regev's comments were accompanied by a graphic highlighting an area taking up a third of Gaza, from

which Palestinians are being told to evacuate. Combined with the previous demand that Palestinians migrate from northern Gaza to the south, at least four-fifths of the country is being turned into a free-fire zone, with the southernmost city of Rafah the only remaining refuge. But even the "safe" areas are being continually bombarded by Israeli forces.

Last month, the Hebrew-language publication *Mekomit* published a leaked document from Israel's Ministry of Intelligence that called for Israel to "evacuate the civilian population to Sinai," where they are to live in tent cities and be prevented from returning to their homes. Behind the scenes, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has been lobbying Egypt to allow the expulsion of the population of Palestine into the Sinai desert.

Now, however, Israeli politicians are discussing these plans not in secret but in public. Last weekend, Israeli Security Cabinet member and Agriculture Minister Avi Dichter, a member of Netanyahu's Likud Party, declared, "We are now rolling out the Gaza Nakba." The Nakba, meaning "catastrophe" in Arabic, refers to the mass expulsion of about 700,000 Palestinian Arabs from their homeland in 1948.

In *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Israeli historian Ilan Pappé describes the way in which the Zionist movement implemented a deliberate plan ("Plan Dalet") aimed at driving out the Palestinian population from what would become Israel. Official Israeli historiography would later claim that the Palestinian people left "voluntarily," but this is a lie.

"Clashes with local Palestinian militias," Pappé writes, "provided the perfect context and pretext for implementing the ideological vision of an ethnically cleansed Palestine. The Zionist policy was first based on retaliation against Palestinian attacks in February

1947, and it transformed into an initiative to ethnically cleanse the country as a whole in March 1948.”

Pappé explains that this plan has been ongoing for decades. “The aim has always been, and it still remains, to have as much of Palestine as possible with as few Palestinians in it as possible,” he said in 2004. It is this plan that is now being implemented.

Israeli officials are calling for another “voluntary” expulsion of Palestinians. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich called Tuesday for “the voluntary immigration of Gaza Arabs to the countries of the world,” which was the “right humanitarian solution.” He added, “The reception of refugees by the countries of the world that really want their interests... is the only solution that will bring to an end the suffering and pain of Jews and Arabs alike.”

In its genocidal actions, Israel has the full backing and support of the Biden administration and the European imperialist powers. On November 9, Biden declared that there is “no possibility” of a ceasefire in Gaza. On November 7, the White House categorically asserted that the administration has “no red lines” for the number of civilians that Israel will be allowed to kill. After every bombing of a school, hospital or refugee camp, the Biden administration has declared that Israel has the “right to defend itself.”

The expansion of the “free-fire zone” to southern Gaza and the assault on the Al-Shifa Hospital were preceded by the “March for Israel” in Washington D.C., in which the leaders of both the Democratic and Republican parties led chants of “No ceasefire!”

American imperialism’s wholesale embrace of Israel’s genocide exposes, for all time, the lie that US foreign policy has anything to do with “human rights.” Throughout the 1990s, the United States used allegations of “ethnic cleansing” to justify military interventions in the Balkans, culminating in the bombing of Serbia in 1999. But the Biden administration’s systematic encouragement of Israel’s ethnic cleansing makes clear that the feigned concern for “human rights” was nothing more than a pretext for Washington’s goal of dissolving Yugoslavia in order to place the Balkans under US and NATO domination.

Similarly, in American imperialism’s war against Russia in Ukraine and the military buildup against China, the US accuses its targets of genocide. In April, Biden was asked, “Have you seen enough evidence to

declare genocide in Ukraine?” to which he replied, “Yes, I called it genocide. It has become clearer and clearer that Putin is just trying to wipe out the idea of even being—being able to be Ukrainian.” The US similarly accuses China of carrying out a “genocide” against the Muslim population in the province of Xinjiang. All of these claims have been revealed as nothing more than propaganda covers for US military action.

Israel’s genocide in Gaza has provoked mass opposition all over the world. Millions of people have taken to the streets on every inhabited continent, including demonstrations of hundreds of thousands in the United States and other NATO countries.

But these mass protests have only deepened the intransigence of the Biden administration and its determination to facilitate Israel’s genocide. This week, Capitol Police attacked a group of protesters at the Democratic National Committee headquarters, injuring six people, while major technology platforms, including Twitter and TikTok, have suppressed statements of political opposition to Israel’s genocide.

Lessons must be drawn. The governments responsible for Israel’s actions cannot be convinced to change course. Stopping Israel’s genocide requires the building of a mass movement in the working class aimed at breaking the power of the financial oligarchy and ending the capitalist system that is the root cause of war.



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